communications options. For instance, icon 480 can initiate a meeting between individuals involved in the process. For instance, a first project participant can use computer 230 (with reference to FIG. 1) to conduct a meeting with another project participant who is using computer 232 (with reference to FIG. 1) by activating the

5   conferencing icon 480. More specifically, the computer system 200 can include hardware and software to provide video and/or audio conferencing features. For instance, using well known video conferencing technology, images of the remote meeting attendees can be projected on the computer screen in real time (or near real time). In yet another embodiment, the computer system may provide known remote

10   control features. Such features allow a meeting leader to commandeer the control of the computer displays of the other attendees (the "passive attendees") of the meeting. The actions performed by the meeting leader would then be duplicated on the screens of the passive attendees (such that, for instance, the same sequence of pages accessed by the meeting leader would be presented to the passive attendees).

15   FIG. 5, as mentioned above, identifies the substeps 504 in a principal step (e.g., in this case, the substeps in the second principal step). It is accessed by activating the link associated with the principal step "Initiation" listed in FIG. 4. The substeps include: substep 1 for completing project charter; substep 2 for establishing project controls; substep 3 for creating a project schedule; substep 4 for creating a

20   detailed cost-benefit analysis and budget; and substep 5 for determining system acceptance criteria. Each of these substeps, in turn, comprises a link to further information regarding the activated substep. For instance, activating a substep link can access one or more worksheets that assist the user in performing the substep, or if so configured, may access detailed textual instructions regarding the substep.

25   The page shown in FIG. 5 also provides a group of tool icons 506. These tool icons can comprise the same tool icons identified in FIG. 4. Preferably, tool icons 506 also provide access to specific tools useful in performing the principal step being displayed. For example, activation of the deliverable icon in the context of FIG. 5 would preferably generate a display (not shown) that identifies only those deliverables

30   appropriate for the second principal step. Further, activation of a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) icon in the context of FIG. 5 would preferably access the cost-benefit analysis

tool(s) most appropriate for performing CBA analysis in the context the second principal step. The memory database (see FIG. 3) provides the relational links to provide this type of association between steps, deliverables, tools, and other information.

5   Finally, FIG. 5 includes well known navigation "buttons" 508 to access the previously accessed page ("previous"), the next screen in a stored series of screens ("next"), and the original screen shown in FIG. 4 ("home").

FIG. 6 provides a detailed process status screen (otherwise known as a "thermometer screen"), which can be accessed by activating the thermometer icon in

10   a prior page (e.g., note thermometer icon 468 in FIG. 4). The arrow symbols and text legends (604, 606, 608, 610, 612, 614 and 616) represent principal steps in the process. Horizontal scroll bar 630 allows the user to adjust the horizontal position of the chart on the page (e.g., for those projects in which the chart does not fit on one page.

15   The substeps appear beneath their respective principal step legends (these substeps were discussed in connection with FIG. 1). Further, the chart presents thermometers that vertically extend beneath respective principal steps (e.g., note thermometers 652, 654, 656, 658, 660, 662 and 664). For example, thermometer 652 extends beneath the arrow symbol and text legend 604 designating the first principal

20   step ("feasibility"). The thermometer can indicate the level of completion of a principal step by successively changing the color (or gray scale) of the thermometer to simulate the rising of the level of fluid in an actual thermometer. That is, the thermometer level is "low" when a principal step is initiated. The thermometer level is "high" when the task is almost completed.

25   The computer is also configured to present a horizontal thermometer 680. This thermometer can indicate the level of completion with respect to the overall process. That is, this thermometer can indicate how many of the principal steps have been completed by changing the color (or gray scale) of the thermometer to simulate the rising level of fluid in an actual thermometer. All level information presented in

30   the horizontal and vertical thermometer charts can also, or in addition, be presented in numeric percentage format, or some alternative format.

In the specific example shown in FIG. 6, the project management team has fully completed the first principal step and has completed half of the substeps in the second principal step. This progress is represented by the respective levels shown on thermometers 652, 654 and 680.

5   The "tollgate" legends and accompanying arrow symbols (for example, "tollgate" 620) indicate the junctures at which approval procedures should be performed. These arrow symbols therefore designate gates (or checkpoints) because they prohibit further progress in the development process until the project meets the criteria specified in the approval procedures.

10   An authorized individual can update the thermometer chart by entering relevant information through a keyboard or other input device (e.g., via mouse) in a manner well known to those skilled in the art. For instance, in one implementation, the computer is configured to present the chart using the EXCEL™ software program, in which the screen defines a series of user entry fields. The user can enter symbols

15   into the appropriate fields to designate progress through the process, such as by entering check marks in the thermometers via keyboard or mouse data entry. Alternatively, the computer can be configured to link information entered via another tool (such as a separate scheduling tool or sign-off worksheet) with progress data presented in the thermometer chart, such that the thermometer chart would

20   automatically be updated upon data entry via the other scheduling tool.

The chart also presents a deliverables field 682 beneath the vertical thermometers. The deliverables field identifies the deliverables generated in each principal step. The deliverables were discussed in the context of FIG. 1. Optionally, the thermometer chart can also include another field (not shown) which identifies the

25   authorizing agents that are assigned the role of validating the viability of the developing project.

Each of the fields in the thermometer chart may additionally include a link which provides access to additional information (e.g., by "clicking" on the field in the thermometer chart using a mouse, etc.). That is, the user can click on any principal

30   step, substep, tollgate, deliverable, etc. to provide additional information regarding these topics (such as instructions, definitions, etc.). The chart may also be printed out